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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

#### In Today's Papers

**Firat: Ataturk's Revolution Traumatized Turkish Society**  
All papers report AKP deputy chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat told The New York Times "Turkish society has been traumatized. Overnight they were told to change their religion, dress, and their language. Their religious ways were dismantled." Firat's statement to NYT over the weekend was reported in Turkish papers Monday. Today's papers report Firat defended his remarks about the "traumatizing" effect of Ataturk's revolution; he stressed he was exercising the freedom of expression. Firat noted the revolution of 1923 led to radical changes in the Turkish lifestyle. "Each revolution is a social trauma. This is true for Ataturk's revolution as well. The French and the Soviet revolution are other examples, and the trauma caused by the Soviet revolution is still felt today," Firat is quoted as saying, adding, "I'm not longing for the return to those days; I'm just making an assessment."

Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan responded by saying, "Turkey is the country it is because of Ataturk." AKP deputy Vahit Erdem said Firat's words were "reactionary," and added Firat should have "avoided such remarks." Opposition CHP deputy group chairman Hakki Suha Okay said, "Firat's statement is an expression of his views regarding the revolution carried out by Ataturk." Opposition MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said Firat's words were a "special attempt" to ensure the closure of the AKP. MHP deputy Oktay Vural blamed Firat for acting as a "foreigners' spokesman." Istanbul Bar of Lawyers said the words of Firat were the "revelation of a hidden agenda."

#### "We Were Saved From another Lie"

Mehmet Y. Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (6/24): "This time it was The New York Times which reminded us that the AKP's founders have serious problems with the founding principles of the Republic. Mehmet Firat, the AKP's number two, told the Times the 1923 Republican revolution was "traumatic" for Turkish society. His words reflect his fundamental views on the issue, which tell us a lot about the reasons the AKP has acted vindictively against the Republic and its core values. Unlike many people, I don't think we

should be angry at Mr. Firat; at least he is the most candid of the top level AKP members. His statement to the Times marks the end of the lies claiming the AKP has no problem with the values of Republic and strongly supports the values of the Republic. How many times have we heard the AKP leadership, including PM Erdogan, proclaim the AKP's commitment to secularism, Ataturk's principles and democracy? We can now conclude that these words were nothing but hypocritical, as they were speaking out of both sides of their mouths."

#### "Trauma"

Zulfu Livaneli wrote in mainstream Vatan (6/24): "First of all, the AKP's Firat suffers from a lack of knowledge regarding history. Turkey's westernization did not begin with Ataturk, in fact it goes back almost 250 years. There were even initiatives from Ottoman Sultans to modernize everyday clothing and change the Arabic alphabet to Latin letters. In other words, Turkey did not change overnight, as Firat claims. Furthermore, the revolutions during the founding of the Republic are historical fact, just like the French revolution. This is how history evolves. The AKP seems to be engaging in efforts to ignore or even to set the clock backwards; this effort will fail, but not by military intervention. On the contrary, Turkey's Republican revolution carried Turkey out of its darkness and improved human rights and development. The founding values brought secularism to us at a time when the world was suffering from religious wars. After all, we are dancing in circles around the same issue. Yes indeed, the Republic needs to be further democratized, but this cannot be done through religion. If someone argues that it can be done, it only paves the way toward totalitarianism."

Erdogan to Visit Baghdad

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Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to visit Baghdad on July 14. State Minister Kursad Tuzmen will travel to Baghdad on June 29-30 to prepare for the visit. In Baghdad, Erdogan will meet with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani. It is not clear whether Erdogan will meet Massoud Barzani, the head of the Kurdish Regional Administration (KRA). Leftist Taraf quotes Iraqi Member of Parliament Othman Mahmoud as saying, "Erdogan will discuss security, political issues and cultural issues, and will sign agreements for economic and trade cooperation." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet expects Erdogan and Maliki to announce an "understanding" on security, energy, economy and cultural cooperation. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet writes, "If the understanding mechanism is implemented, Ankara will have legitimized the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)," says Cumhuriyet. However, mainstream papers also quote President Talabani as saying the KRG should not be excluded in this mechanism.

KRG President Massoud Barzani: "The PKK is not a Terrorist Organization"

Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Bugun, Taraf: Papers report that in an interview with Il Tiempo, an Italian newspaper, KRG President Massoud Barzani asked if he was afraid of a Turkish invasion. Barzani replied, "We are not afraid of anyone. But, the occupation of northern Iraq would trigger a crisis for the whole region. Kurds should wage a political, not a military struggle. The PKK is not a terrorist organization. If the PKK refuses to meet its pledges to hold talks with Turkey, then it could be branded a terrorist organization. The Kurdistan region has taken important steps to establish security. International coordination is needed to fight terrorism and extremism." In response to a question regarding Kirkuk, Barzani said "Kirkuk is definitely part of Kurdistan. However, Kirkuk's identity should be determined by respecting those living there. We have no intentions to jeopardize security and stability in Iraq. The decision about Kirkuk should be based on a referendum."

Chief Prosecutor's Verbal Assessment on DTP Comes Today

Milliyet, Radikal, Star: Court of Appeals Chief Prosecutor Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya will present his views verbally on the DTP closure case at the Constitutional Court today. The party will present its defense on September 16. Meanwhile, Liberal Radikal reports that Mahmut Alinak who has announced his candidacy for DTP

chairmanship said that if he was elected as chairman, he would go to Imrali to speak to Abdullah Ocalan or Kandil in order to enable the PKK to take a "no-action" decision. He also added that he would urge the Turkish General Staff to end the operations within and outside the country, and would propose a solution plan to the government to end the Kurdish problem.

Gul, Erdogan to Basel for Turkey-Germany Soccer Game  
All papers report President Abdullah Gul will travel to Basel on Wednesday to watch Turkey's match with Germany in the Euro 2008 soccer championship semi-finals. Prime Minister Erdogan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also are expected to attend the game.

#### EU Freezes Iranian Assets

Coverage regarding the EU's decision to close Iran's national bank is portrayed in a straightforward fashion as the measure is considered a blow against Iran. However, coverage noticeably excludes Iran's view of the sanctions, except for reporting by Islamist Zaman, a paper considered pro-Iran. Mainstream Milliyet reports, "The EU Imposes Heavy Sanctions on Iran," as, "Iran's national bank is closed in London, Paris, and Hamburg," and "Twenty of Iran's top officials will not be able to travel to the EU." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Iran's banks are banned." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Iran withdrew its money from European banks before the news of new U.S.-EU sanctions emerged," yet Zaman makes no mention of the assets in the Iranian banks closed by the EU. Leftist Taraf reports, "Following Sarkozy's speech to

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the Knesset during his visit to Israel, Iran's largest bank was closed and travel restrictions were placed on 20 Iranian officials and 15 Iranian organizations were closed." Liberal Radikal reports, "The EU Cuts Tehran's Financial Arteries."

#### Yeni Safak: Blackwater Agents in Pakistan

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports from its Islamabad bureau that the private security company Blackwater has now entered Pakistan. Yeni Safak cites unnamed intelligence sources who confirm, "Blackwater agents are disguised as diplomats and are sent in teams of 20-25 to assist the CIA and FBI in clashes with the Taliban and Al Qaeda." In addition, the paper reports "Experts warn that Blackwater agents in the region could complicate the situation and make it worse," as Pakistani defense expert Hamit Mir told the paper, "this is a major threat to (Pakistan's) national security."

#### TV News: CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler said Turkish state-owned oil company TPAO might form a consortium or bid alone for future Iraqi oil and gas deals.
- On Tuesday, Prime Minister Erdogan is to join a ceremony in Ankara to mark a contract to be signed by Tusas Aerospace Industries (TAI) with Italy's Augusta Westland to co-produce attack helicopters.
- The Turkish Prime Ministry said in a statement a "slush fund" was used to meet state spending in 2007. It's not possible to make public statements about the secret fund, the statement said.

#### International News

- The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Luis Maria de Puig, said the Turkish Constitutional Court should abide by the European Convention on Human Rights and Venice Commission criteria while ruling on the AKP closure case.
- The International Crisis Group says the new process in Cyprus might be the last chance for the reunification of the divided island.
- Natural gas-rich Tarija has become the fourth Bolivian state to declare autonomy from the government of President Evo Morales.

